CONFIDENTIAL
Security Information

Lebanon
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

May 17, 1953

8:45 a.m.

SUBJECT: UNRWA and the Palestine Refugees

PLACE: Beirut, Lebanon - U. S. Embassy

PARTICIPANTS:

United States	Lebanon
Honorable John Foster DULLES, Secretary of State	Leslie J. CARVER, Acting Director, UNRWA
Honorable Harold E. STASSEN, Director, Mutual Security Agency	Donald C. BERGUS, Acting USREP, UNRWA
Honorable Harold B. MINOR, American Ambassador	
Honorable Douglas MacARTHUR II, State Department Counselor	
Honorable Lenry A. BYROADE, Assistant Secretary of State	

(And Others)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY WOLF JR DATE 5/15/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
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Mr. Carver opened the discussion by stating that UNRWA was a non-political agency but of necessity it worked in a heavily charged political atmosphere. There were three outstanding problems in the area: (a) Anglo-Egyptian relationships; (b) relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors; (c) the Palestine refugees.

It would appear that simultaneous progress on all three problems was an urgent necessity. In the present state of affairs, the UNRWA has been able to do little more than hold the fort as far as the refugee problem is concerned. The original Agency program contemplated an expenditure over a three-year period of $50 million for relief and $200 million for re-integration projects. But two years have passed and the $50 million for relief was just about used up. There has been a definite slowness on the part of Arab Governments to cooperate with the Agency in identifying and executing projects which would lead to refugee rehabilitation. There was the problem of lack of continuity and of administrative capacity on the part of the newly sovereign local states which led to delay. There was also an understandable reluctance on the part of local leaders publicly to identify themselves with a program which seemed to prejudice the refugee claim for repatriation.

repatriation. There were military dictatorships in Syria and Egypt. They were not, however, the same type of totaliterian dictatorship which existed in Europe before World War II. Public opinion counted for a great deal. Colonel Shishikly, for example, states * t he faces two problems in cooperating with the Agency: (a) the pro lem of gaining refugee support for the Agency's program; and (b) the necessity of Syria's engaging in parallel economic activity for the benefit of her own depressed nationals.

Mr. Stassen requested information about the Ramadane project near Damascus. Mr. Carver informed him that there was one rather poor drilling rig on the spot and he hoped to have two modern machines there within a month to continue necessary test-drilling and engineering studies. We were also moving onto the site where the present tent settlements on the project would be replaced by a more permanent type of village.

After Mr. Carver had reviewed the status of present UNRWA program agreements with the Arab States (agreements involving commitments of $112 million and envisaging resettlement of 322,000 refugees), the Secretary asked how our programs were connected with refugee settlement. Mr. Carver pointed out that these present program agreements would be supplemented by project agreements which very definitely linked UNRWA expenditure with refugee resettlement.

Mr. Byroade asked for Mr. Carver's opinion on the Yarmuk scheme. Mr. Carver said that he had just recently visited the site of the proposed dam at Maqarin and had been greatly impressed. He understood that the natural conditions for constructing a dam in that spot were superb. There were two other problems connected with the project, however, that would involve considerable further study. They were: (a) the fact that the Yarmuk joins the Jordan in territory now in the hands of Israel; (b) the fact that the waters of the Yarmuk alone would probably suffice only to irrigate the East Bank of the Jordan Valley. Irrigation of the HKJ section of the West Bank of the Valley would require a considerable amount of fresh water from the Jordan River itself. If Israel's current plans for development of the upper waters of the Jordan should be carried out, development of the West Bank of the HKJ section of the Valley would be impractical.

Mr. Byroade asked if repatriation were to be offered to the refugees tomorrow, would they return? Mr. Carver expressed the opinion that although a large number of refugees might wish to return, very few would probably wish to remain. There was doubtless no question of their returning to their original homes and farms. They would have to compete with Israeli nationals for the limited resources within Israel. A form of repatriation could be the settlement of refugees in areas relinquished by Israel in a peace settlement. Thus it was estimated that 100,000

refugees

refugees could find their livelihood in the International Zone of Jerusalem; perhaps 100,000 in Western Galilee; a few thousand in the area of an Egyptian-Jordan corridor through the Negeb.

Mr. Stasson inquired about the possibility of compensation. Mr. Carver pointed out that according to the latest studies made by the Palestine Conciliation Commission, the larger share of compensation would go to wealthier refugees not presently receiving UNRWA relief. Mr. Bergus stated that even if full compensation were to be paid, there would still remain 400,000 to 500,000 refugees who would require outside assistance before they could be self-supporting.

The Secretary closed the discussion by expressing the appreciation of the U.S. Government of the difficult task which UNRWA was facing.